

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for requesting a service provider to provide services so that the service provider can demonstrate to a service intermediary that it provided services requested by a service consumer, the method comprising:

generating by the service consumer a start code and a sequence of codes starting with the start code and ending with an end code, each code being generated by applying a function to the previously generated code, the codes being generated in a forward order from the start code to the end code;

registering with the service intermediary an indication of an end code of the service consumer and an identification of the service provider wherein the intermediary provides the end code to the service provider;

when the service consumer requests the service provider to provide services, providing by the service consumer to the service provider the generated codes in reverse order of generation such that the service consumer only provides the next code in reverse order when a prior requested service has been provided by the service provider;

when the service provider can verify that the end code can be derived from the code provided with a request, providing the requested service to the service consumer;

providing by the service consumer to the service intermediary an indication of a consumer last code provided by the service consumer to the service provider;

providing by the service provider to the service intermediary an indication of a provider last code provided by the service consumer to the service intermediary provider;

when the service intermediary determines that the consumer last code and the provider last code are the same, indicating that evidence has been provided that the requested service was provided; and

when the service intermediary determines that the consumer last code and the provider last code are not the same,

applying the function to the provider last code to determine whether the end code can be generated;

when the end code can be generated, indicating that the service provider has provided evidence that the requested service was provided and thus establishing that the consumer last code was not the actual last code provided to the service provider or establishing that the provider last code was not the actual last code provided to the service provider by the service consumer; and

when the end code cannot be generated, indicating that the service provider has not provided evidence that the requested service was provided and thus establishing that the provider last code was not a code provided in a request to the service provider by the service consumer such that the service provider verified that the end code can be derived from the provider last code.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the indication of the end code is a start code from which the end code can be derived by the service intermediary.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the registering include providing a start code and an end code.

4-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the service consumer requests the service provider to provide a service after the last requested service has been provided by the service provider.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the service consumer can limit the number of outstanding requests for services to control exposure to liability for requested services that have not yet been provided.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Canceled)

12. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the service provider verifies that the end code can be derived from a provided code by comparing a previously provided code to the result of applying a function to the provided code.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the sequence of codes has a length.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the length is agreed upon by the service provider and the service consumer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the setting of the length of the sequence of codes can be used by the service provider to control exposure for liability for provided services for which payment has not yet been received.

17. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the service intermediary provides the length to the service provider.

18. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the service provider registers with the service intermediary an indication of an end code of the service provider and provides the service consumer with a code from which the end code of the service provider can be derived when a service is provided.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein a code provided by the service provider to the service consumer can be used in determining whether the service consumer requested services.

20-43. (Canceled)

44. (New) A computer-readable storage device storing instructions for controlling a computer system of a service consumer to request a service provider to provide services so that the service provider can demonstrate to a service intermediary that it provided services requested by the service consumer, by a method comprising:

generating by the service consumer a start code and a sequence of codes starting with the start code and ending with an end code, each code being generated by applying a function to the previously generated code, the codes being generated in a forward order from the start code to the end code;

registering with the service intermediary an indication of an end code of the service consumer and an identification of the service provider wherein the intermediary provides the end code to the service provider;

when the service consumer requests the service provider to provide services, providing by the service consumer to the service provider the generated codes in reverse order of generation such that the service consumer only

provides the next code in reverse order when a prior requested service has been provided by the service provider;

when the service provider can verify that the end code can be derived from the code provided with a request, receiving by the service consumer an indication that the requested service has been provided by the service provider;

providing by the service consumer to the service intermediary an indication of a consumer last code provided by the service consumer to the service provider, wherein the service provider also provides to the service intermediary an indication of a provider last code provided by the service consumer to the service provider;

when the service intermediary determines that the consumer last code and the provider last code are the same, receiving an indication that evidence has been provided that the requested service was provided; and

when the service intermediary determines that the consumer last code and the provider last code are not the same, receiving from the service intermediary an indication of whether the service provider has provided evidence that the requested service was provided, the service intermediary determining whether the evidence was sufficient by:

applying the function to the provider last code to determine whether the end code can be generated;

when the end code can be generated, indicating that the service provider has provided evidence that the requested service was provided and thus establishing that the consumer last code was not the actual last code provided to the service provider or establishing that the provider last code was not the actual last code provided to the service provider by the service consumer; and

when the end code cannot be generated, indicating that the service provider has not provided evidence that the requested service was

provided and thus establishing that the provider last code was not a code provided in a request to the service provider by the service consumer such that the service provider verified that the end code can be derived from the provider last code.

45. (New) The computer-readable storage device of claim 44 wherein the indication of the end code is a start code from which the end code can be derived by the service intermediary.

46. (New) The computer-readable storage device of claim 44 wherein the registering include providing a start code and an end code.